

House Republican Press Release

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Wilton Little League Opening Day, April 10, 2005



Remarks by State Rep Toni Boucher

I would like to thank Wilton Little League for the privilege of joining all of you on this glorious spring day for your Opening Day ceremonies. I bring you the greeting and best wishes for an enjoyable spring season of baseball from Governor Rell and the Connecticut legislature.

Many people may not know that Little League was founded in 1939 and granted a Federal Charter in 1964, by unanimous act of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives and signed by the President.

National Little League Baseball's mission is to "to promote, develop, supervise, and voluntarily assist in all lawful ways, the interest of those who will participate in Little League Baseball."

Further through proper guidance and exemplary leadership, the Little League program assists youth in developing the qualities of citizenship, discipline, teamwork and physical well being. Most importantly the mission statement explains that by espousing the virtues of character, courage and loyalty, the Little League Baseball program is designed to develop superior citizens rather than superior athletes.

That is something that we can all keep in mind as the season heats up and the excitement of play can at times create a charged, pressure filled atmosphere.

When I was invited to participate in today's festivities it was suggested that I might address the subject of sportsmanship from the perspective of a parent of 3, as someone that has been involved in educational policy and a child advocate for most of my public service life. There are appropriate analogies made between waging a hotly contested political campaign and sports. How you conduct yourself, fair play, and being a good winner or loser is also on display for all to see.

Too often we witness this scenario. "Eddie was crying by the time the baseball game ended. It wasn't because his team had lost. It wasn't because he was unhappy about his own playing. It wasn't even because of anything the other team had said or done. Eddie's tears came after his dad yelled at him - in front of all his teammates - for missing the fly

ball that could have saved the game. Eddie was just 8 years old.”

It is so easy to get so wrapped up in winning and losing or in how well our own child performs that we can lose sight of what's really important and what the true mission of little league espouses:

“Kids practice good sportsmanship when they treat their teammates, opponents, coaches, and officials with respect. They learn the basics of sportsmanship from the adults in their lives, especially their parents and their coaches. Kids who see adults behaving in a sportsmanlike way gradually come to understand that the real winners in sports and in life itself are those who know how to persevere and to behave with dignity - whether they win or lose a game.”

Knute Rockne said it best...

“ One man practicing sportsmanship is far better than fifty preaching it.”

“Displaying good sportsmanship isn't always easy: it can be tough to congratulate the opposing team after losing a close or important game. It includes acknowledging good plays made by others and accepting even bad calls gracefully. Kids who learn how to do it will benefit in many ways.”

Science tells us that our brains are hard wired by the time we are 10 years old, making our experiences during this formation period last a lifetime.

A child who [bullies](#) or taunts others on the playing field isn't likely to change his or her behavior when they are in the classroom or in social situations. In the same way, a child who practices good sportsmanship is likely to carry the respect and appreciation of other people into every other aspect of their life.

Most of you on this field will not make baseball your life work but it should make your life's work better for your team experience!

Thanks again and make this special time on Wilton's baseball diamonds the very best it can be, and have fun!